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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8355
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0978
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7967
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 6139
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4465
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2137
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 4436
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3536
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8573
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 6018
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0698
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2842
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000637

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/02/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: LARGE SEARCH OF TAMILS IN COLOMBO

Classified By: Acting DCM Maria E. Brewer REASONS: 1.4(b,d).

11. (C) On July 2, in an early morning operation Sri Lankan army, police, and STF forces cordoned off and searched Kimbula Ela, a predominantly Tamil area of Colombo. According to an Embassy mail room employee who lives in the area, 800 people (including the Embassy employee) were told to leave their homes and line up in a nearby outdoor playground. The police then asked each person to hand over their identification. Each of the 800 residents were called forward individually and placed in front of a video camera. According to RSO FSN's police contacts the search came after an individual recently arrested confessed that he was one member of a 20 member team of LTTE suicide bombers intent on attacking military and government targets prior to the SAARC Summit July 27th - August 3rd. Local think tank Centre for Policy Alternatives reported they are considering filing a fundamental rights case in court to challenge the government's tactics.

12. (C) COMMENT: The scope of the search and the removal of the local population from their homes represents an escalation in tactics by the government which normally allows residents to stay in their homes when an area is searched. During a meeting with DAS Feigenbaum on June 30, Defense Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa previewed such tactics, arguing that while all Tamils aren't terrorists, close to all terrorists are Tamils. He added that even though such tactics might look like ethnic profiling to the international community it was justified in the Sri Lankan context where the GSL faced an adversary like the LTTE that didn't play by established rules. The raid and the tactics used are likely a reflection of the growing concern on the part of the government that the LTTE will try to tarnish Sri Lanka's image by staging an attack just prior to the Colombo SAARC Summit later this month.

MOORE